ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS: TAKING STOCK AND LOOKING AHEAD

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**Mission:** Engage the people of Michigan, the United States, and the world in applied research, education and outreach to develop regionally integrated, sustainable regional food systems

**Work:** Michigan Good Food Charter, food access and health, farm to institution, food hubs, food systems planning, organic production and marketing, regional food systems research and outreach
Get Involved!

Our networks make it easy for you to stay informed and communicate directly with the people currently making critical decisions that affect our planet.

Join the UCS Action Network
www.ucsusa.org/action

Or, if you are an expert,
Join the UCS Science Network
www.ucsusa.org/ScienceNetwork
Why bring economists together?

Purpose of meeting and document

• Maturation of the local food movement - building on the good work already done

• More questions and need for “proof” that local and regional food systems build strong economies

• Numerous ad-hoc studies of impact (jobs, income, economic multipliers) yet difficult to draw conclusions across these studies

• No formal “learning community” in place to review and critique the design, methods, and conclusions
Outputs and next steps

• 2 page brief – available now
• Academic-oriented paper - next step
• Continue the conversation – increase learning and scholarship in the work
• NOTE! – we realize social and other important benefits not considered (and should be)
Local Foods and Economic Impacts

Market Forces
Creating jobs through public investment in local and regional food systems

Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens and Scientists for Environmental Solutions
What Evidence Supports This Claim?

Because farming is a wonderful way of life!

Pierre's Sheep
St. Lamb, LLC
McBain, MI
“Local Food Economics” Meeting
What’s Been Done?

• Studies with narrow geographic /market scope
  – Farmers markets
  – Farm-to-school; “buy local” campaigns
  – Farm-level studies

• Larger geographic studies
How to Evaluate Existing Studies?

- Study Design
- Methodology
- Interpretation
I. Study Design
II. Methodology
III. Interpretation
Bottom Line

• Positive regional economic impacts of local food markets

• Economic impacts modest

• Many aspects of local food markets unmeasured
Research Priorities

• Data collection

• Larger-scale studies

• Economic research that goes beyond job-counting
Questions to ask
(when commissioning a study)

• What are the goals of the study?
• Who is the audience?
• What geographic boundary conditions and markets will be evaluated in the study?
• What methods will the study investigators use?
• Are the study investigators well-versed with the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches?
Questions to ask (when commissioning a study)

• Are the study investigators willing to share the assumptions and methodologies used to conduct the analysis in a public report?

• Are there pre-existing data or studies representative of your community?

• To what extent do the results depend upon coordination or support from other regions?

• Do you have an advisory team of partners who can help guide the study in cooperation with the researcher?
Next steps

• Academic-oriented paper
• Continue the conversation
• Other research studies and sessions
• Welcome your ideas and feedback to build scholarship and learning as we go forward
For MORE INFORMATION:

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